



Listen: Interview with member of first Black family in Los Alamos

February 10, 2021

The Lab is commemorating Black History Month with events, stories and this podcast conversation between Lab Historian Madeline Whitacre and Clayborne Carson Jr.

Carson Jr. was a member of what is thought to be the first Black family to live in Los Alamos. He was a young boy when his father, Clayborne Carson Sr., accepted a job with the Atomic Energy Commission (AEC) as a security inspector in December 1947. The Carson family moved to Los Alamos shortly thereafter. Later, as a teenager, Carson Jr. worked at the Lab during the summers.

Whitacre, who is a part of the National Security Research Center — the Lab's classified library, which also houses unclassified artifacts from LANL history — spoke with Carson Jr. about living here post-World War II.

At that time, the AEC managed the town, which was still fenced following the Lab's secret war-time efforts and not open to the public. AEC regulations prohibited racial segregation; schools were integrated and housing was government owned and assigned based on job and family size.

Today, Carson Jr. works as a historian and founding director of Stanford University's Martin Luther King Jr. Research and Education Institute. Listen as he shares memories of Los Alamos and the Lab.

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